

South Dakota National Guard

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

St. Thomas More ‘Purples Up!’ for military kids

By Sgt. 1st Class Theanne Herrmann
SDNG Public Affairs Office

RAPID CITY, S.D. – Students and parents wearing the color purple filled the high school gymnasium at St. Thomas More for the school’s “Purple Up! For Military Kids Day” April 15.

April is nationally known as “Month of the Military Child,” and children across the state are getting together to show their support, said Sheila Troxel Snyder, operation military kids coordinator.

In tribute to the 7,500 military children in the state, South Dakota’s Operation: Military Kids Program, part of the 4-H Youth Development program of SDSU Cooperative Extension invite South Dakota communities, businesses and organizations to wear purple on April 15.

“The color purple represents all of the branches in the service,” said Snyder. “This is a great way to visually show military kids that they are appreciated for all of their sacrifices and responsibilities they take on when their parent or family member is serving away from home.”

St. Thomas More senior, Caitlin Oster, president of the SDNG Youth Council and member of the Purple Up committee spoke about how being a military child has developed her into an independent, strong-willed individual.

“Being a military child has made me so independent and a strong-willed leader,” said Oster, daughter of SDARNG’s Lt. Col. Michael Oster. “Having to deal with my dad’s deployments and drills makes me a “pick up parent” when he is away. I take on more responsibilities than I normally would, and I think that has made me a stronger person. It’s a sacrifice but rewarding at the same time.”

Guest speakers for the event included Rapid City Mayor Sam Kookier, South Dakota National Guard Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch and U.S. Air Force Col. Kerry Britt, commander of the 28th Mission Support Group at Ellsworth Air Force Base.

“It is great and impressive that St. Thomas More set aside a whole hour of their school day to honor the military child,” said Reisch.

During the event the students were asked to stand up if they are a military child, or if they have a brother, sister, aunt or uncle serving in the military. Almost everyone stood up, said Reisch.

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“In today’s military many kids have watched their parents deploy overseas and go into combat and that is something they didn’t sign up for. It is something they have had to deal with,” said Reisch. “We are indebted to the families and children for all they do.”

St. Thomas More student Trevor Bartunek, the son of a dual-military couple Lt. Col. Deb and Lt. Col. Ted Bartunek who serve in the SDARNG, read Gov. Dennis Daugaard’s proclamation to mark April 2015 as the Month of the Military Child in South Dakota.

Rapid City Mayor Sam Kooiker followed suit and invited all of the military kids to stand next to him at the podium as he read his proclamation to make April 15 as “Purple Up! For Military Kids Day,” in Rapid City – a special day to show local support of our military children and families.

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150415-Z-CW157-007: St. Thomas More students wear purple to honor military youth students during the “Purple up! For Military Kids Day,” event at the St. Thomas More High School gymnasium in Rapid City, S.D., April 15, 2015. April marks the nation’s “Month of the Military Child,” a time to honor military youth in our communities who have been impacted by deployments and the challenges military families face before, during and after deployments. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Theanne Herrmann/Released)



150415-Z-CW157-051: St. Thomas More senior, Caitlin Oster, president of the SDNG Youth Council, Purple Up committee member and daughter of SDARNG’s Lt. Col. Michael Oster, explains how being a military child has made her an independent, strong-willed individual to students at St. Thomas More, Rapid City, S.D., April 15, 2015. April marks the nation’s “Month of the Military Child,” a time to honor military youth in our communities who have been impacted by deployments and the challenges military families face before, during and after deployments. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Theanne Herrmann/Released)



150415-Z-CW157-106: Keynote speaker Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, South Dakota National Guard’s adjutant general addresses the audience about the sacrifices military children face when one of their family members serves at St. Thomas More’s “Purple Up! For Military Kids,” event April 15, 2015, Rapid City, S.D., April marks the nation’s “Month of the Military Child,” a time to honor military youth in our communities who have been impacted by deployments and the challenges military families face before, during and after deployments. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Theanne Herrmann/Released)



150415-Z-CW157-134: Rapid City Mayor Sam Kooiker reads the proclamation amongst military children to make April 15, 2015 as “Purple Up! For Military Kids Day,” at St. Thomas More’s military children appreciation event, in Rapid City, S.D. April marks the nation’s “Month of the Military Child,” a time to honor military youth in our communities who have been impacted by deployments and the challenges military families face before, during and after deployments. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Theanne Herrmann/Released)

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